

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTRY PERSONNEL CHANGES AT BUREAU-LEVEL

REF: SEOUL 9926

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTRY PERSONNEL CHANGES HAVE BEGUN AS NEW FON MIN, PAK TONG-CHIN, BEGINS TO ELIMINATE SOME OF KIM TONG-CHO'S TEAM AT BUREAU DIRECTOR LEVEL. NO CLEAR PATTERN HAS EMERGED AS YET, ALTHOUGH A FEW NEW APPOINTEES HAVE WORKED WITH FON MIN IN PAST ASSIGNMENTS. ASST. MIN. ECON. AFFAIRS HAS MOVED TO INFORMATION MINISTRY VICE MINISTER AND ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR POL AFFAIRS HAVE NOT CHANGED YET, BUT RUMORS OF THEIR CHANGE CONTINUE. END SUMMARY.

1. AMONG FIRST CHANGES IN FOREIGN MINISTRY WERE THE APPOINTMENT OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS BUREAU DIRECTOR YI SANG-OK TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AS SECRETARY FOR GENERAL AFFAIRS, CLEARLY A PROMOTION FOR YI. YI WAS REPLACED BY FORMER INFORMATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS BUREAU DIRECTOR PAK SANG-YONG, WHO SERVED IN WASHINGTON WHILE CHONG IL-KWON WAS AMBASSADOR AND SUBSEQUENTLY ON TWO SEPARATE OCCASIONS AS SECRETARY TO CHONG WHILE HE WAS PRIME MINISTER. PAK HAS ALSO SERVED IN TOKYO

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AND IN THE ROK UN MISSION. HE REPORTEDLY REMAINS CLOSE

TO CHONG IL-KWON.

2. CHONG U-YOM, FORMERLY MINISTER IN THE ROK UN MISSION WAS PROMOTED TO POSITION OF DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND TREATIES BUREAU, REPLACING HAN U-SUK, WHO HAS NOT YET BEEN GIVEN A NEW ASSIGNMENT. ALSO RELIEVED AND AWAITING REASSIGNMENT ARE YI NAM-KI, FORMER DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT, CHI YON-TAE, FORMER PROTOCOL OFFICE DIRECTOR AND SIN KI-HUN FORMER AFRICA-MIDDLE EAST BUREAU DIRECTOR.

3. OTHER NEW FACES ARE CHOE HO-CHUNG, NEW ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT (FORMERLY MINISTER, ROK MISSION TO GENEVA), YIM MYONG-CHIN, NEW ACTING DIRECTOR OF PROTOCOL OFFICE (FORMERLY AMBASSADOR TO ZAIRE, AND REPORTEDLY AN ASSOCIATE OF PAK TONG-CHIN'S IN THE ROK EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON IN THE EARLY 1950'S). ALREADY ON THE JOB ARE RO YONG-CHAN, DIRECTOR OF AFRICA-MIDDLE EAST BUREAU, WHO WAS PROMOTED FROM COUNSELLOR IN THE ROK EMBASSY IN PARIS AND HAM TAE-HYOK, DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE BUREAU, PROMOTED FROM STUDY ASSOCIATE AT FOREIGN AFFAIRS INSTITUTE. THE NEW FOREIGN AFFAIRS INSTITUTE STUDY ASSOCIATE IS YUN CHAN, FORMER CONSUL-GENERAL IN SAN FRANCISCO.

4. OTHER THAN FACT SHAKE-UP IS MAJOR, THUS FAR NO CLEAR PATTERN HAS EMERGED. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE DOES NOT, AT FIRST EXAMINATION, SEEM TO BE ANY PARTICULAR FAVORITISM FOR ASSOCIATES OF PAK TONG-CHIN. PAK HIMSELF HAS BEEN AWAY FROM SEOUL FOR ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS, AND ALTHOUGH HE HAS JUST COMPLETED AN ASSIGNMENT WHICH GAVE HIM SUBSTANTIAL EXPOSURE TO A VARIETY OF FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS AND HAS MADE FREQUENT TRIPS TO SEOUL, HIS EXPERIENCE HAS NOT PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE PERSONAL TIES WITH HIS FOREIGN MINISTRY COLLEAGUES THAT A SEOUL ASSIGNMENT WOULD HAVE. A FEW OF THE NEW APPOINTEES WERE ASSOCIATED WITH HIM IN THE PAST, BUT IN ADDITION FACT MANY HAD BEEN IN JOBS SOME TIME AND DUE FOR CHANGE THE PURPOSE OF THE EXERCISE SEEMS TO BE FOCUSED MORE ON REMOVING SOME OF THOSE APPOINTED BY KIM TONG-CHO THAN ON CREATING PLACES FOR PAK TONG-CHIN PROTEGES. FONMIN TOLD AMBASSADOR JAN 12 CHANGES WERE IN RESPONSE TO TRANSFER REQUESTS ALREADY ON RECORD.

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IN ADDITION, ASIDE FROM KIM TONG-HUI, WHO WAS APPOINTED VICE MINISTER OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION, AND THUS NOT REALLY REMOVED BY PAK, AND THE APPOINTMENT OF CHOE HO-CHUNG AS ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT, THERE HAS BEEN NO EFFORT YET TO REPLACE THE TOP-LEVEL OFFICIALS OF MOFA. THERE ARE RUMORS THAT VICE MINISTER NO SINYONG WILL BE REPLACED BY ROK AMBASSADOR TO VENEZUELA SONG KWANG-CHONG, BUT NO HAS TOLD FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS HE

WILL NOT BE LEAVING IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ASSISTANT MINISTER KIM CHONG-TAE SEEMS SLIGHTLY MORE FIRMLY SET, AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT. THERE HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT LESS SPECULATION ABOUT HIS REMOVAL THAN ABOUT NO'S, WHO IS SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS THE NEXT ROK AMBASSADOR TO AUSTRALIA. THE TOP-LEVEL CHANGES, INCLUDING APPOINTMENT OF A NEW AMBASSADOR TO HEAD ROK MISSION IN NEW YORK, MAY BE AWAITING ARRIVAL FROM GENEVA OF THE NEW DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT CHOE HO-CHUNG.

5. SEVERAL OF THE NEW APPOINTEES HAVE SERVED IN THE U.S. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY RECORDS, SUPPLEMENTED BY CONVERSATIONS AT MOFA. PAK SANG-YONG, YIM MYONG-CHIN, AND CHOE HO-CHUNG HAVE SERVED IN WASHINGTON (CHOE WAS COUNSELOR 1969-72). CHAN WAS IN SAN FRANCISCO AND PAK SANG-YONG AND CHONG U-YOM HAVE ALSO SERVED AS MINISTERS IN THE ROK UN MISSION IN NEW YORK.
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